GUIDE TO THE FL12 MASAI FILE

[This file is concerned with the Masai (Maasai), a "Nilo-Hamitic" people living in Kenya and Tanzania and speaking a language belonging to the Sudanic linguistic stock. The file as a whole includes data on the Masai proper who are cattle pastoralists, and various groups of Kwafi (Wakwafi) who have become settled agriculturalists, as well as data on the related agricultural Samburu and Arusha. However, almost all of the material in the file is concerned with the pastoral Masai. The social organization of the Masai is quite complex, being based on divisions such as sections (il oshon), including the Purko, Loita, Moitanic, Uasin Gishu, Siria, Serenget and Salai; age grades (age classes); villages (consisting of a group of families), called bomas or manyattas; clans; and families. The Masai until the early part of the 20th century were the great warriors of East Africa and still are a very independent people.

There are 19 sources in the Masai file, all of them in English except for one translation from the German (18: Merker). The major sources in the file are 1: Hollis, 18: Merker and 19: Talbot. 1: Hollis, by a British colonial officer, contains an account of the Masai language and its grammar, and a large number of translations of Masai texts dealing with various aspects of their culture. 18: Merker, by an officer in the German "Protectorate Troops," is the basic source in the file, being a thorough ethnographic description of the Masai for the period 1895-1905. 19: Talbot, by a geographer, is an extended analysis of the ecology of western Masailand and the Masai's part in the system. Age-sets and socio-political system are discussed in a number of sources, among them being 2: Bernardi,

which is an analysis of the age-system from the literature; 4: Sandford, a history of the system and British efforts to sedentarize the Masai; 7: Hailey, a brief examination of the territorial reorganization by the tribe by the British government; 8: Whitehouse, which describes the formation of a new age-set; and 9: Fosbrooke, an administrative survey of the Masai social system. 15: Margetts and 16: Hamilton are brief descriptions of the e-unoto ceremony, a recurrent part of the age-set institution. 13: Huntingford is a general cultural summary of the Masai from the literature. Miscellaneous information on Masai culture is given in 5: Maguire (penal codes), 6: Thomson (an early travel account), 10: Elliott (Masai warrior's coiffeur), 11: Leakey (miscellaneous notes), 12: Storrs (miscellaneous notes), 14: Orr and Gilks (physique and health), and 3: Hollis (kin terms). 17: Jacobs is a bibliography of the literature to 1965. This is a generally good file, with a large amount of data on most aspects of the culture. A great deal of the material relates to the period 1890-1910 with scattered information for the periods before and after, except for 19: Talbot's work which dates from the late 1950's. The researcher should be aware of these time foci, and also of the problems of distinguishing between the various age-sets and sections. A number of marking decisions were made for the Masai file. Data on clans have been placed in Category 614; on the priest chief (laibon, ol oiboni), magicians and medicine men and rain makers all in Category 791; information on district chiefs has been placed in Category 634; on households in Category 596, on smiths (a distinct caste among the Masai) in Categories 326 and 564; on the il-oshon (ol-osho), which may be either a tribal unit or strictly political territorial group, in Category 634; information on the dynamics of political power in Category 561; for the moran (warrior) societies in Category 561, and for ceremonies that initiate the Masai youth into the status of both legal majority and adulthood in Category 561. The file was processed between 1964 and 1973.]